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# Government

In Government, the focus is on the principles and beliefs upon which the United States was founded and on the structure, functions, and powers of government at the national, state, and local levels. This course is the culmination of the civic and governmental content and concepts studied from Kindergarten through required secondary courses. Students learn major political ideas and forms of government in history. A significant focus of the course is on the U.S. Constitution, its underlying principles and ideas, and the form of government it created. Students analyze major concepts of republicanism, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights and compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems. Students identify the role of government in the U.S. free enterprise system and examine the strategic importance of places to the United States. Students analyze the impact of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media on the American political system, evaluate the importance of voluntary individual participation in a democratic society, and analyze the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Students examine the relationship between governmental policies and the culture of the United States. Students identify examples of government policies that encourage scientific research and use critical-thinking skills to create a product on a contemporary government issue.

To support the teaching of the essential knowledge and skills, the use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material such as the complete text of the U.S. constitution; selected Federalist Papers; landmark cases of the U.S. Supreme Court; biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs; speeches and letters; and periodicals that feature analyses of political issues and events is encouraged. Selections may include excerpts from John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, *Federalist 51*, and *Miranda v. Arizona*.

**John Adams** (1735-1826) The second president of the United States, Adams was born in Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard. He was a representative to the First and Second Continental Congresses. He led the debate which ratified the Declaration of Independence, served as ambassador to England, and served eight years as vice president to Washington before his election as president. He managed to make more enemies than friends, promoting legislation which was not favored by either political faction, the federalists or the anti-federalists. His support of the Alien and Sedition Acts angered many citizens. He was defeated by Thomas Jefferson in 1800 and retired from public life. Both he and Jefferson died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

**Alexander Hamilton** (1755-1804) Hamilton devised a financial system which stabilized the national

economy after the American Revolution, and restructured national debt so it functioned as a political asset rather than a liability. Born on Nevis in the British West Indies, Hamilton was intelligent and decisive, characteristics which earned him the support of patrons who sent him to the American colonies for his education. He became involved in the Revolution and enlisted in the New York militia in 1776, becoming Washington's aide-de-camp. He married into one of New York's wealthiest families, practiced law, served as a delegate to four Continental Congresses, and represented New York in the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia of 1787.

Hamilton was one of the leading federalists; he favored a strong central government and helped write *The Federalist* papers. As the first secretary of the treasury, he convinced Congress to assume the debts states incurred during the Revolution, supported foreign trade and tariffs to provide revenue to the nation, established a mint, and devel-

oped a national bank, the Bank of the United States. Hamilton believed that as the federal government assumed states' debts, financial leaders would turn their allegiance from the states toward the nation. This was part of his plan to strengthen the central government. He also believed creditors to the nation were more apt to support the central government if it owed them money. Thus, the debt generated political support. The Federalist party developed in support of his approach to government.

Regarding the bank charter, Hamilton and Jefferson clashed over interpretation of the Constitution and the extent government could exercise powers not expressly permitted. Jefferson argued that the U.S. Constitution did not confer power to the central government to create a national bank. As a result, states reserved the right to charter banks. Hamilton believed in a loose interpretation: that the U.S. Constitution permitted what it did not forbid, and that government was justified in establishing a bank to support trade. The bank was chartered for 20 years, in 1791.

**Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679) Hobbes was an English philosopher and political theorist who formulated the social contract theory which influenced John Locke and other intellectuals in the era of the Enlightenment. Those developing the U.S. system of government also drew from his works. Hobbes argued that the principle governing the relationship of humans, nature, and society was that individuals had a natural right to seek self-preservation by any means. This could lead to anarchy with everyone competing against everyone. However, individuals benefited most when they formed governments to which they surrendered their freedom and got security and order in exchange. Hobbes envisioned the government as an absolute monarchy, the prevalent type at the time. Humans entered into "social contracts" with their government by divesting some of their independence in exchange for protection. His views were preserved in several writings including the influential *Leviathan* (1651).

**Thomas Jefferson** (1743-1826) The third president, Thomas Jefferson was a founding father and principal author of the Declaration of Independence which rationalized the break with Britain. He also approved the Louisiana Purchase which nearly doubled the area controlled by the United States. Jefferson was born into the Virginia planter class, attended private schools and entered the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769. By 1774 he owned 10,000 acres and more than 200 slaves. That same year he wrote the first of many influential political pamphlets. He became an early and effective leader in the American Revolution. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and in 1776 he was a member of the committee which wrote the Declaration of Independence. He drafted a plan to organize the territories of the expanding United States, a system based on rectangular surveys. His plan to bar slavery from the territories was incorporated into the Northwest Ordinance of

1787, but Jefferson owned slaves until he died.

In 1785 he replaced Benjamin Franklin as minister to France and was in France when the U.S. Constitution was drafted. Jefferson served as secretary of state under President George Washington. By 1793, he and James Madison organized opposition to the Federalist's plan for national economic development and foreign entanglements with England. The Republicans emerged to provide an outlet for citizens to oppose office holders they disagreed with, and to elect replacements which shared their own concerns. Thus the first political system developed. The Republicans favored state's rights in government in opposition to the strong central government favored by Federalists. Jefferson expressed his concerns about this in the Kentucky Resolutions, written in 1798. Jefferson ran for president in 1796, but earned only enough votes to serve as vice-president to Federalist John Adams. In 1800 Jefferson was elected president and served two terms. He maintained peace and encouraged westward expansion during the first term, completing the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 from Napoleon. Foreign affairs clouded his second term as France and England both refused to recognize that the United States was neutral. Jefferson imposed the unpopular Embargo Act of 1807 which paralyzed trade for over one year. It was repealed by Congress days before James Madison assumed the presidency. Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

**Abraham Lincoln** (1809-1865) Abraham Lincoln served as president of the United States during the Civil War. He managed to preserve the unity of the United States and took steps to abolish slavery, but was assassinated before he could implement post-war plans. He began his political career by serving four terms in the Illinois state legislature beginning in 1834. He served one term as representative from Illinois to the U.S. House of Representatives. He was elected the sixteenth President in 1860, re-elected in 1864, and assassinated in 1865. He helped build the Republican Party, which replaced the Whig Party in the 1850s, from obscurity to the party of choice by 1860. His Gettysburg Address, delivered in November 1863 at the dedication of the national cemetery at the Civil War battlefield, called for national unity despite obstacles. He began the process of freeing slaves in the Confederate states when he issued his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. His most lasting influence remains the Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in December 1865, months after his death. It banned slavery throughout the United States. His likeness is one of four presidents carved into the monument at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota. Presidents' Day, a federal holiday, occurs on the third Monday in February, near his birthday, February 12.

**John Locke** (1632-1704) John Locke's writings on the nature of government influenced the founding fathers of the United States. He was an English philosopher whose

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political theories were best summarized in his doctrine of natural rights which outlined the fundamental rights all humans should enjoy: life, liberty, and property. Locke's most significant work was his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) in which he rejected the divine right of kings to rule, and argued for constitutional government to limit the power of the monarch thus preserving the natural rights of citizens. Locke invoked Hobbes' social contract theory that humans, being "by nature, free, equal, and independent," choose to live with others and create governments to protect their rights. The social contracts citizens form with the government binds them to act in support of the common good of society, and for government to do the same. Thus government develops at the consent of the governed and can be dissolved if the citizens believe that their government fails to act in their best interests. The committee which drafted the Declaration of Independence, led by Thomas Jefferson, adapted Locke's concept of natural rights and social contract as the philosophical rationale for breaking with England.

**James Madison** (1751-1836) Born in Virginia, James Madison played a role in most of the significant political events over a 40-year period from 1776, when he began his political career, to 1817, when he completed his second term as the fourth president of the United States. He participated in the Continental Congress, and because of his leadership role in writing and ratifying the U.S. Constitution, is considered the "Father of the Constitution." He was one of three authors of *The Federalist* papers. He supported a strong central government, a political theory that coalesced as the platform of the Federalist party. This party and its opposition, the Federalists, formed the basis of a bipartisan political system which continues today. He wrote the first 12 amendments to the Constitution, ten of which were ratified as the Bill of Rights. One of the two not ratified, regarding congressional pay raises, was later ratified as the 27th Amendment in May 1992. Elected president in 1808, he presided through the War of 1812 and fled Washington, D.C. in August 1814, when the British invaded and set the public buildings, the Capitol, and the White House afire.

**Baron de Montesquieu, Charles-Louis Secondat** (1689-1755) A French political and social philosopher, Baron de Montesquieu defined the principle of separation of powers, calling for a system of checks and balances in government, in *The Spirit of Laws* (1734). His ideas influenced the founding fathers, notably Thomas Jefferson who developed them further in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784).

**George Washington** (1732-1799) George Washington became the first President of the United States elected following procedures outlined in the newly ratified Constitution. He served two terms between 1789 and 1797. A resident of Virginia, he was a surveyor, a planter, a soldier in the French and Indian War, a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution, and the chairman of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. His prestige as a southern planter, his strong character, and his heroic military accomplishments ensured his recognition, and the Electoral College unanimously supported him for president in 1789.

During his two terms he started regular meetings of his cabinet and supported Alexander Hamilton's plans to deal with war debts and create a currency system for the new nation. Washington was a Federalist, believing in a strong central government and the responsibility of the wealthy to ensure the wellbeing of all, but he remained open to the opinions of others, especially fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson. During his second term, an opposition political party solidified as the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans. In 1793 he sought to avoid another war with European powers, Britain and France, by issuing the Neutrality Proclamation, a move which incensed pro-French Jeffersonians but heartened Federalists. This stands as one of Washington's greatest accomplishments because it allowed the fledgling United States to build a solid system of government, expand westward, and develop a merchant marine to engage in trade without becoming embroiled in another European war.

His plantation home was Mount Vernon. He is known as the "Father of Our Country" and his likeness is one of four presidents carved into the monument at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota. Presidents' Day, a federal holiday, occurs on the third Monday in February, near his birthday, February 22.

Official website of the government of the russian federation. Government of the Russian Federation. <http://government.ru/en/>. Highlight selection. Sender's email address \*. Enter valid email. Message. Government.ru: Send Message. Thanks. Warning. Message. Government.ru: Embed code. Copy. The Government of South Korea is a centralized democratic republic with the three primary branches of government; executive, legislative and judicial. The president acts at the head of state and is the highest figure of authority in the country, followed by the prime minister and government ministers in decreasing order. The Executive and Legislative branches operate primarily at the national level, although various ministries in the executive branch also carry out local functions. Local governments Government, the political system by which a country or a community is administered and regulated. Read more in this article about the forms and historical development of governments in the societies of the West from ancient times to the 21st century.